

Testimony of
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the committee, I am honored to appear before you today to discuss our progress in emergency preparedness since September 11, 2001. Before I begin I want to take a moment to thank the members of the committee for your ongoing support of our emergency planning efforts, as well as your support of the men and women of the U.S. Capitol Police – it is both valued and appreciated.

You may recall that one year ago this afternoon, during preparations for the lying in state ceremony for President Reagan, the presence of an unidentified aircraft inside the Flight Restricted Zone led the Capitol Police command staff to order the evacuation of the entire Capitol complex. This incident was our first full-campus evacuation since September 11, 2001. On May 11, 2005, it was again necessary to evacuate the Capitol complex because of an aircraft.

These events, though eleven months apart, are not rare. Several statistics from the TSA regarding aircraft incursions in the National Capitol Region lend some valuable perspective. Since January 2003, there have been over 3,000 airspace incursions in the Capitol region; over 140 of these have been penetrations of the extended Flight Restricted Zone; with 50 penetrations of actual prohibited airspace – which includes the area over the Capitol and White House.

Just a few years ago, the very idea of an airplane being used in an attack on the Capitol was something one read about in the pages of a Tom Clancy novel. Sadly, this is no longer true. To people around the world, the Capitol – perhaps more than any other building – represents the United States of America and the democratic principles at the heart of our form of elected government. Yet, it is this very symbolism that makes the Capitol and Congress such tempting targets for those who would wish to strike a blow against our form of government.

Since September 11, 2001, I along with those sitting beside me at this table, as well as our colleagues on the Senate-side, have been diligently involved in both the risk assessment and risk management necessitated by this new threat environment. Our goals have been to plan and to prepare, refine our procedures and investigate every possible method to best manage the potential threats.

We have made considerable progress. Areas we have already focused on include:

- Improved coordination of security efforts between House and Senate. An example is the Emergency Measures Task Force. This joint group composed of representatives from all essential offices involved in emergency planning and the Capitol Police, meets bi-weekly.
- Threat and vulnerability assessments of the complex. Several studies have been completed or are underway:
 - A thorough threat assessment of the entire complex completed by an outside contractor with the assistance of law enforcement experts.
 - Commissioned an independent review of the evacuation planning for the Capitol and all House Office Buildings.
 - A study is underway examining the consequences of an aircraft hitting the Capitol or an office building, and whether we should shelter in place or evacuate.
 - A study is ongoing to review the evacuation procedures when we are outside the building.
- Testing and improvement of alarms, annunciators, and a public address system.

- Creation of individual Office Emergency Coordinators for each Member office, committee, and support office.
- Continued OEC training covering evacuation procedures and the use of the quickhoods.
- Development of evacuation and shelter-in-place procedures.
- Deployment of over 20,000 quickhoods, along with ongoing training for Members and staff.
- Establishment of mass decontamination procedures.
- Enhancements to our chemical-biological response capability.
- Enhancements to explosive protection and response.
- Development of a program for Member briefing centers, as well as contingency planning for continuity of government.

However, the complexity of the security situation we encounter on Capitol Hill requires us to always move forward. The security of the Capitol complex is difficult because of the interdependency of buildings, the enormous number of visitors to the campus, the “openness” of the institution, and the changing nature of Congress and staff. In addition, the density of development around the Capitol, and the variety of emergency situations that might arise, adds to the complexity.

The national importance of the Capitol Hill complex demands an effective and comprehensive security approach to ensure success. Emergency management, including preparedness, response, and recovery of essential functions, are all vital components of a comprehensive program to ensure Capitol Campus security.

We are addressing all of these components with the development of a proposed Emergency Management Architecture to ensure agency coordination; and a Computer-Aided Evacuation Modeling that will enable us to test, evaluate, and monitor evacuation performance.

Let me briefly summarize each of these related efforts.

In March 2005, the Capitol Police Board commissioned a study to review the overall emergency management structure of House and Senate organizations. Among the recommendations made in this study are the following:

- Affirm Capitol Police authority to serve as the lead organization for all Capitol complex life safety planning and incident response functions.
- Allow Capitol Police to promote a common, Hill-wide emergency management implementation.
- Retain continuity planning in House and Senate organizations.
- Create a Joint Bipartisan Leadership Continuity Board. This group would strengthen the strategic planning aspects of the continuity and emergency planning decision making.
- Create a Joint Continuity Executive Team. This group, comprised of all of the continuity stakeholders, would relay guidance back to the organizations and work to develop continuity plans where a joint response or coordination is needed.
- Conduct periodic Capitol complex-wide emergency exercises.

The second level in our efforts is the development of Computer-Aided Evacuation Modeling. The System will enable security officials to test and evaluate changes in processing procedures and routings, building design and layout options, and evacuation options. When the System is in place, we will be able to test and evaluate virtually any change in infrastructure, operations, security procedures, advanced technology, or first response. We will be able to coordinate emergency response and jointly understand evacuation options with all involved Federal and District emergency response agencies.

We are confident that this combination of initiatives will enable us to better understand risks, test and evaluate appropriate responses, plan and train in advance of events, and ensure that communications and coordination among responsible agencies will be appropriate to the tasks to which we have been assigned.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I thank you again for taking the time to focus on the vital issue of emergency preparedness. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.